

**Protection • Management • Information**



# MISSISSIPPI

**FORESTRY COMMISSION**



**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

# Table of Contents

Message from the State Forester . . . . .	1
Board of Commissioners . . . . .	2
MFC Office Contact Information . . . . .	3
Region Map . . . . .	4
Organizational Chart . . . . .	5
Forest Management . . . . .	6
Private Land Activities . . . . .	6
Private Landowner Services . . . . .	6
Forest Resource Development Program (FRDP) . . . . .	7
Forest Stewardship Program . . . . .	8
Public Land Activities . . . . .	8
School Trust (16th Section) Lands . . . . .	8
Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI) . . . . .	9
Forest Health . . . . .	10
Forest Legacy Program . . . . .	11
Urban and Community Forestry Program . . . . .	11
Forest Protection . . . . .	12
Fire Services . . . . .	12–13
Rural Fire Assistance (FEPP, FFP) . . . . .	14
Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA) . . . . .	14
Aviation . . . . .	14
Communications . . . . .	15
Forest Information . . . . .	16
Public Outreach . . . . .	16
Underserved Landowner Outreach Program . . . . .	17
Firewise . . . . .	17
Business Support . . . . .	18
Financial Services . . . . .	18
Information Systems . . . . .	18
Purchasing and Property . . . . .	18
Human Resources . . . . .	18
Safety and Training . . . . .	18
Financial Report . . . . .	19

*The Mississippi Forestry Commission provides equal employment opportunity and services to all individuals regardless of disability, race, age, religion, color, gender, creed, national origin or political affiliation.*

*The Mississippi Forestry Commission is an equal opportunity provider.*

**On the Cover:** Photo of Pascagoula River Swamp submitted by The Nature Conservancy, Mississippi Chapter

# Message from the State Forester



As we reflect on the past fiscal year, we are reminded of the important role forestry plays in Mississippi. Forestry is one of the top three industries in the state, contributing \$15.44 billion to the economy and employing over 68,000 people. With over 19.2 million acres of forestland, it remains vital to our state's economic vitality, environment, and way of life. The Mississippi Forestry Commission is dedicated to protecting and managing these crucial natural resources.

This year brought significant challenges, particularly an extended drought that began in late July, resulting in over 2,500 wildfires that burned more than 51,000 acres. The Mississippi Forestry Commission was on the front lines battling these fires with the help of our dedicated partners. Collaborations with local and volunteer fire departments, the U.S. Forest Service, and others were essential to protecting our communities.

For the first time in recent history, we called on out-of-state resources to support our firefighting efforts. By deploying our personnel to assist elsewhere through a reciprocal agreement, we provided critical support while gaining valuable training experience to enhance their skills. This arrangement also allows us to call in resources from other states, when necessary, which proved invaluable during the severe wildfire season.

An adequate workforce is critical to our agency's operations. We addressed staffing challenges by securing legislative approval for pay raises for our rangers, technicians, and foresters, ensuring we maintain the workforce needed to protect and manage Mississippi's forests. Additionally, we are actively tackling the aftermath of the drought, which has caused tree health issues and increased the risk of future wildfires due to pests like the Southern Pine Beetle.

Despite these unique challenges, the past year has been a success. We remain dedicated to our mission of safeguarding Mississippi's forests and supporting our communities. Together, we will continue to ensure the health and sustainability of our forests for generations to come.

Russell Bozeman  
State Forester

# Board of Commissioners

## **Ken Martin, Chairman**

951 Cato Road  
Mendenhall, MS 39114  
Phone: (601) 942-7513  
Email: kmartin951@aol.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2026  
Representing: 3rd Congressional District

## **Al Hankins**

P. O. Box 575  
Grenada, MS 38902  
Phone: (662) 226-2961  
Email: alberthankins@live.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2025  
Representing: At-large

## **Patricia Thomasson**

P.O. Box 490  
Philadelphia, MS 39350  
Phone: (601) 656-6000  
Email: pat@thomassoncompany.com  
\*Term Expires: January 19, 2029  
Representing: At-large

## **Dr. Wes Burger**

P.O. Box 9680  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
Phone: (662) 325-0868  
Email: lwb6@msstate.edu  
\*Term Expires: Non-expiring  
Representing: Ex-Officio

## **D. Allen Greenhaw**

174 Lakeover Drive East  
Columbus, MS 39702  
Phone: (662) 889-1336  
Email: greenhawforestry@gmail.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2025  
Representing: 1st Congressional District

## **Jim Lockett, Vice-Chairman**

72 Lawler Cove  
Tutwiler, MS 38963  
Phone: (662) 902-7348  
Email: jhldublin@gmail.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2025

## **Joseph E. Pettigrew**

P. O. Box 592  
Kiln, MS 39556  
Phone: (228) 493-8733  
Email: petigru@aol.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2029  
Representing: 4th Congressional District

## **Mike Mikell**

P. O. Box 247  
Port Gibson, MS 39150  
Phone: (601) 431-6535  
Email: mikellpfsi@hotmail.com  
\*Term Expires: June 30, 2025  
Representing: 2nd Congressional District

## **Dr. George Hopper**

117 Tuxford Road  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: (662) 617-4373  
Email: gmh58@msstate.edu  
\*Term Expires: March 19, 2029  
Representing: At-large

*\* Members, by statute, may serve after their expiration date until they are replaced.*

## **Mississippi Forestry Commission State Office**

3139 Hwy 468 West  
Pearl, MS 39208  
Phone: (601) 359-1386  
Fax: (601) 359-1349

### **Region 1 Office**

1711 McCullough Blvd.  
Tupelo, MS 38801  
Phone: (662) 842-5312

**Serving the counties of:**

Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Coahoma, DeSoto, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Marshall, Monroe, Panola, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tishomingo, Tunica, Union, Yalobusha

### **Region 3 Office**

3139 Highway 468 West  
Pearl, MS 39208  
Phone: (769) 218-6830  
Fax: (601) 420-6027

**Serving the counties of:**

Claiborne, Clarke, Copiah, Covington, Hinds, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Jones, Lauderdale, Madison, Newton, Rankin, Scott, Sharkey, Simpson, Smith, Warren, Wayne, Yazoo

### **Region 2 Office**

1801 Highway 51 South  
Grenada, MS 38901  
Phone: (662) 226-3321  
Fax: (662) 226-0170

**Serving the counties of:**

Attala, Bolivar, Carroll, Choctaw, Clay, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Kemper, Leake, Leflore, Lowndes, Montgomery, Neshoba, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Sunflower, Washington, Webster, Winston

### **Region 4 Office**

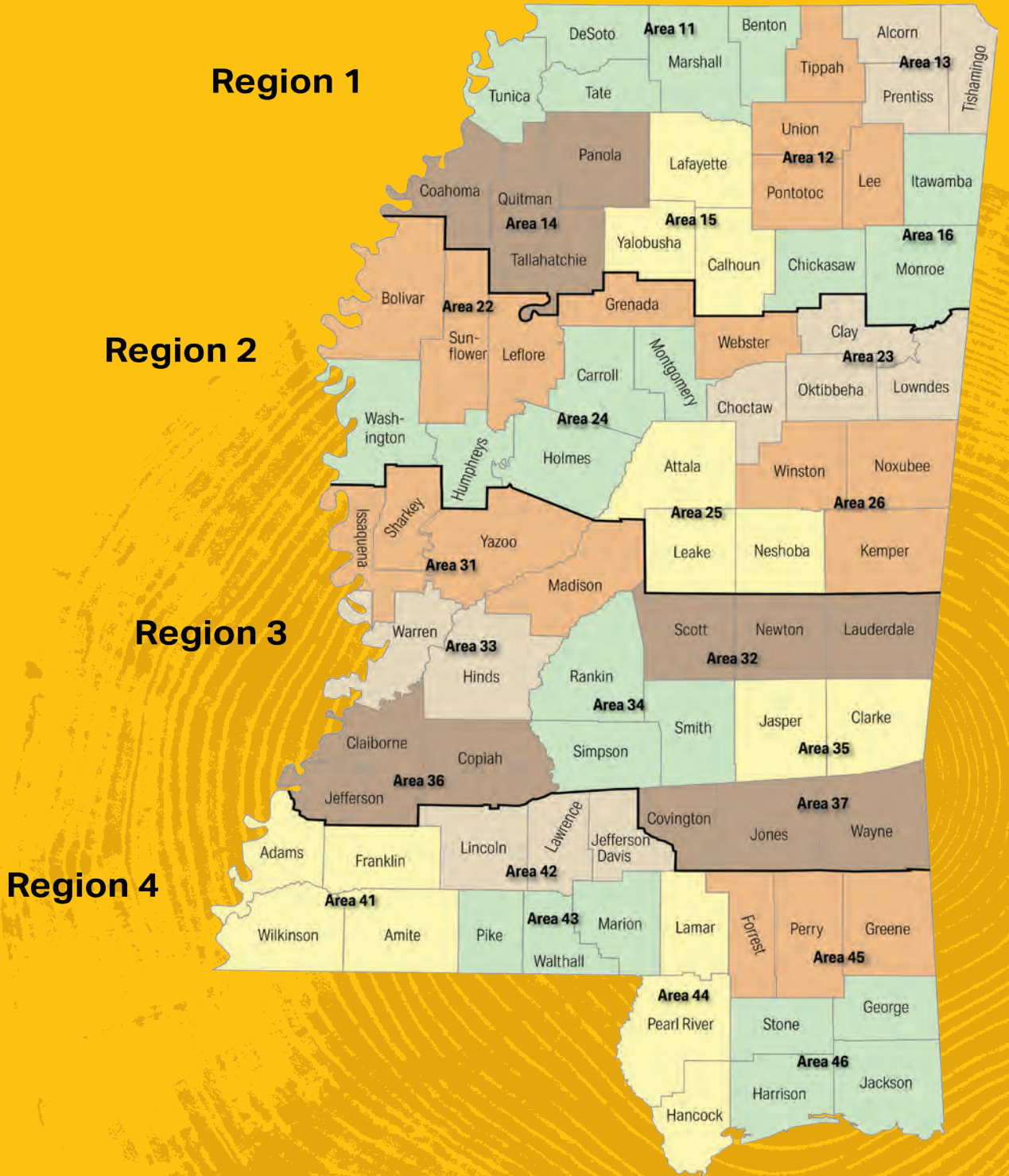
477 South Gate Rd.  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401  
Phone: (601) 540-5239  
Fax: (601) 544-0839

**Serving the counties of:**

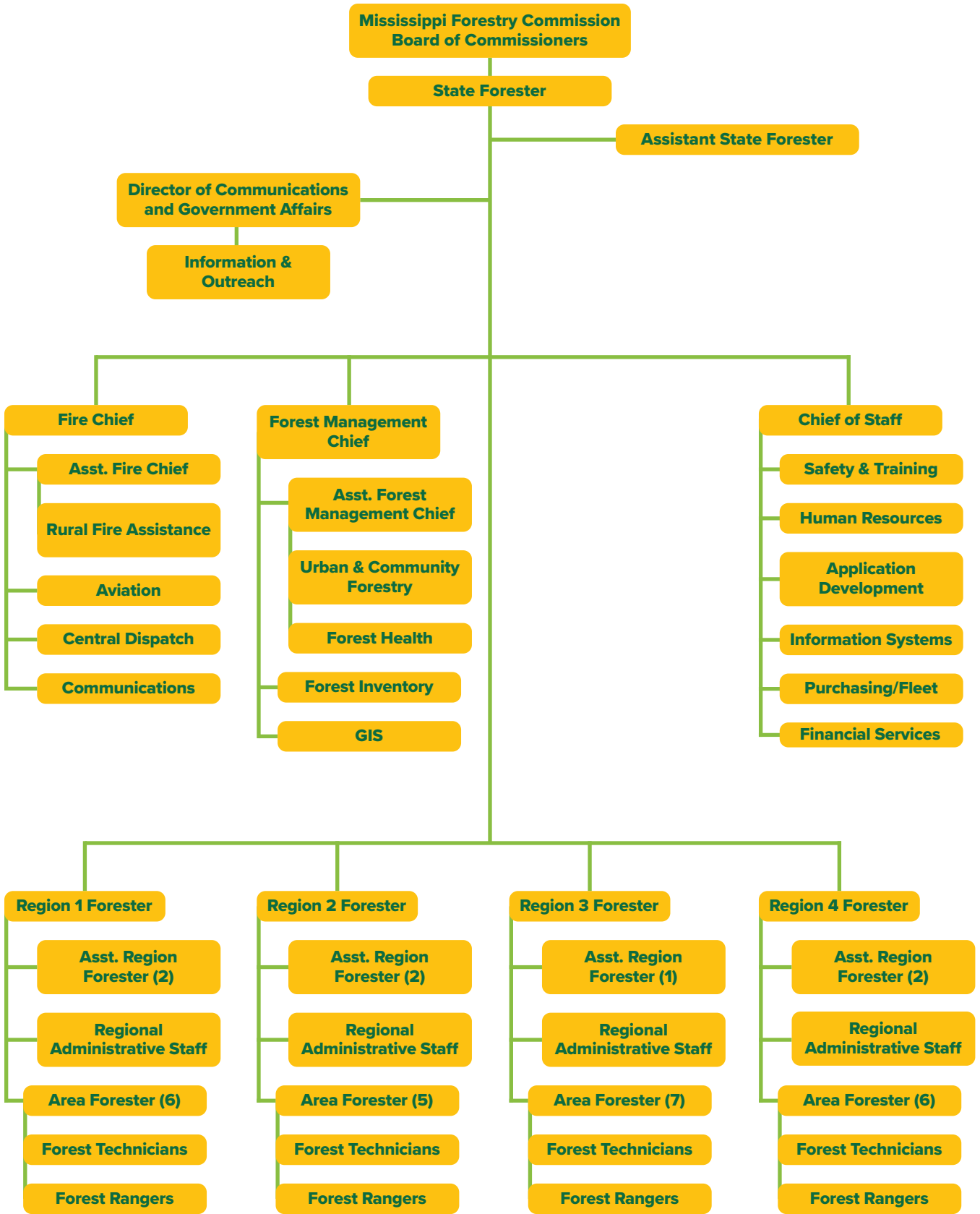
Adams, Amite, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Stone, Walthall, Wilkinson



# Mississippi Forestry Commission Region Map



# Organizational Chart



# Forest Management

The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is charged with promoting sound forest management practices, which help maintain the integrity of the environment and provide for our state's future natural resource needs. The MFC offers a variety of forest management programs and services to assist private landowners. The MFC also provides forest management assistance on School Trust forestland in Mississippi.

The Forest Management Department provides private forest landowners with limited on-the-ground services, technical assistance, cost-share assistance and advice to increase timber production and provide for the sustainable management of forest resources.

## Private Land Activities

In FY24, the MFC continued to provide technical and financial assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners in Mississippi. This assistance is provided through programs designed to enhance and protect Mississippi's natural resources.

## Private Landowner Services

The Mississippi Forestry Commission offers services to non-industrial, private forest landowners. This includes forest management planning and advice and direct, fee-based maintenance services.

Landowners with large tracts of forestland are routinely referred to private consulting foresters. MFC has a list of private Registered Foresters in Mississippi on the website ([mfc.ms.gov](http://mfc.ms.gov)). For more information about available local resources, please contact the Region Office that serves your area to be referred to the correct Area Forester and Area Office.

Most technical assistance and forestry advice is free to the landowner. Direct services are available for a fee. Prices and types of service may vary on an individual job basis. Some of these services may be obtained from private vendors. Contact your local Mississippi Forestry Commission Regional Office for requested services.



**\$2.59  
MILLION**  
**IN FRDP FUNDING  
WAS DISTRIBUTED  
TO PRIVATE FOREST  
LANDOWNERS.**

### SERVICES PROVIDED FREE-OF-CHARGE:

- Conducting compliance checks for state and federal forest improvement cost-share programs
- Providing forest management advice regarding forest-damaging insects, diseases, invasive species, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve forest productivity and water quality.

### DIRECT SERVICES (FOR A FEE):

- Forest Management Plans
- Hazard mitigation/prescribed burning
- Firelane/firebreak establishment and maintenance
- Logging road/skid trail/loading deck maintenance
- Southern Pine Beetle suppression activities (ground location, flagging, marking, coordination of harvest)
- Vegetation management (only as a last resort if the landowner is unable to find another source) - control of competition, wildlife habitat enhancement, and invasive species control (landowner must provide herbicide and surfactant)

The Mississippi Forestry Commission assists Mississippi timber owners in forest pest management by conducting forest pest surveys and evaluations. Recommendations on practices to salvage timber, reduce, and prevent damage from forest pests will be provided to landowners upon request.





# FY24 Forest Management Accomplishments

## Private Land Activities

Landowners Assisted. . . . .	7,468
*Total Forest Management Plans . . . .	742
Acres under Management Plans . . . .	78,731
Prescribed Burning (Acres) . . . . .	9,873

## Public Land Activities

Timber Sale Receipts . . . . .	\$8,240,767
Number of Sales. . . . .	83
Acres Regenerated. . . . .	16,751
Boundary Line Maintenance (Miles). . .	523
Fire Maintenance (Miles) . . . . .	321
Prescribed Burning (Acres) . . . . .	4,883

## Prescribed Burning

Private & Public Land	
Total (Acres). . . . .	14,756

## Forest Resource Development Program

Impacted Acres . . . . .	87,269
Funds Distributed. . . . .	\$2.59 million

\*Certified Stewardship & other Forest Management plans

# Forest Resource Development Program

The Forest Resource Development Program (FRDP) was established in 1974 by the Mississippi Legislature to aid in the development of Mississippi's forest economy.

In FY24, the FRDP distributed \$2.59 million to private forest landowners, and 87,269 acres were regenerated or improved. This program helps offset landowner's expenses by reimbursing a portion of the costs associated with implementing specific forestry practices.

Cost-share funding provides reimbursement for tree planting and forest improvement practices designed for long-term timber production and enhanced wildlife development.

Payments cover approximately 50-75 percent (depending on the practice) of the total cost of implementing these forestry practices, with a maximum limit set for each practice.

Eligible landowners may receive up to \$10,000 of FRDP assistance per year. In return, the landowner agrees to manage and protect the area receiving FRDP assistance from fire and grazing for a minimum of 10 years, using the proper practices. To learn more about FRDP, visit the MFC website or contact your local MFC office. Please note: submission of an application does not guarantee participation in the FRDP, or that cost-share funds will be available. The local MFC office will confirm funding amounts and participation in the FRDP when the application is final.



## Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program promotes natural resource planning on privately owned forestland. Landowners not classified under other forest management programs are encouraged to utilize stewardship management to care for their natural resources by developing and implementing a Forest Stewardship Management Plan.

Forest Stewardship Management Plans are based on sound management principles designed to restore and protect forest resources while improving fish and wildlife habitats. Forest Stewardship Management Plans share the same format as those required by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) for their certification program. 70,682 acres were reported under a Certified Stewardship plan or another type of forest management plan in FY24.

The Forest Stewardship Program is funded by the USDA Forest Service and administered by the MFC. The MFC provides technical assistance for the Forest Stewardship Management Program in conjunction with federal, state, and private natural resource agencies and organizations.

For more information, please visit [mfc.ms.gov/Forest-Stewardship](https://mfc.ms.gov/Forest-Stewardship).

## Public Land Activities

The MFC provides forest management assistance on approximately 485,000 acres of non-federal public forestland in Mississippi. In FY24, the MFC managed four state forests (Three Rivers, Kurtz, Camden, and Jamie L. Whitten) and assisted school boards with forest management on Mississippi School Trust (16th Section) Lands. The MFC also rendered assistance to other agencies, boards, departments, or entities that have jurisdiction over state and other public forestland statewide.

**REVENUE FROM TIMBER SALES ON NON-FEDERAL PUBLIC FORESTLAND TOTALED**

**\$8,240,767**

**TIMBER SALE REVENUE FROM SCHOOL TRUST LANDS DIRECTLY BENEFITS CHILDREN ATTENDING NEARBY SCHOOLS.**

## School Trust Lands

The MFC is charged by state law to manage forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands located in 67 counties throughout the state.

The MFC sustainably manages approximately 480,000 acres of forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands. Timber sale revenue from school trust lands directly benefits students attending nearby schools. Funds are reinvested into the school districts, where they are earned at the discretion of the local school board.

In addition to timber production, management considerations also include wildlife, soil and water quality, aesthetics, and other appropriate benefits of forestlands.

The MFC ensures that proper care is taken to manage forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands sustainably and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are employed during the management process.

The combined revenue from timber sales on Mississippi school trust lands and other public lands totaled \$8,240,767 in FY24.

The MFC converted its collective management data into a GIS system to prepare the first comprehensive 16th Section Public School Trust lands assessment. This assessment, together with more intensive forest management practices, allowed the MFC to meet its goal for timber-generated revenue. Mississippi's forested 16th Section Public School Trust lands are certified by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the first-ever large-scale certification of non-federal public forestland in the nation. ATFS certification ensures that School Trust Lands will continue to be managed sustainably, for the benefit of future generations.



**70,682  
ACRES**

**WERE REPORTED UNDER A  
CERTIFIED STEWARDSHIP PLAN  
OR ANOTHER TYPE OF FOREST  
MANAGEMENT PLAN IN FY24.**

## **Mississippi Forest Inventory**

The Mississippi Forest Inventory (MFI) Program is responsible for developing and implementing the statewide forest resource inventory, necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy.

The forest inventory also effectively compiles forest inventory-based information for economic development and policy purposes. In order to present an accurate picture of Mississippi's forest resources, the statewide forest inventory operates on a continuous five-year cycle.

The MFC uses the information compiled during the inventory to respond to resource requests for forest product, ethanol conversion and wood pellet facilities. The MFC leverages its Geographic Information Program to use forest inventory data to develop forest resource analysis.

In an effort to promote the economic development of Mississippi's forest resources, the MFC, in conjunction with the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), provides forest resource maps and information to businesses investigating the possibility of locating in Mississippi.

Maintaining an up-to-date analysis of the state's forest resources is critical information for both existing and potential forest-industry investors. The MFI Program continues to provide the necessary data to keep Mississippi's \$15.44 billion forest-based economy competitive. Companies wishing to locate in Mississippi often consult MFI Program data during their decision-making process.



**THE AMERICAN TREE FARM  
CERTIFICATION GROUP  
CERTIFICATION ON SCHOOL  
TRUST LANDS  
ENSURES  
THAT  
MISSISSIPPI  
WILL REMAIN  
A STRONG  
COMPETITOR  
IN THE GROWING GLOBAL  
NEED FOR CERTIFIED WOOD.**

## Forest Health

The MFC provides forest pest detection, evaluation, and control recommendations on Mississippi's private, urban, and non-federal public forestland. The MFC conducts at least one statewide aerial survey each year and additional surveys if necessary. Insect and disease spots identified during the aerial survey are then recorded on the Southern Pine Beetle Activity Map, and the data is available to the public, allowing private landowners the opportunity to determine if any SPB activity was located near their property. Visit [mfc.ms.gov/southern-pine-beetle-activity-map](http://mfc.ms.gov/southern-pine-beetle-activity-map) to view the map.

The MFC also provides technical assistance and special incentive programs to private landowners to combat threats from invasive plants, such as Cogongrass and kudzu. Visit the MFC website for more information.

In FY24, the southern pine beetle continued to threaten more timber in the southern region of the United States than any other forest insect. In response to this ongoing risk, the MFC continued to partner with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Health Protection Program (Southern Region) to administer a Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Prevention/Education Program. This program aims to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning to reduce the risk of SPB hazards. In addition, the associated SPB cost share program was designed to provide a financial incentive for landowners who applied approved first thinning management practices to their pine stands to reduce their risk of southern pine beetle infestation.

The second leading insect to threaten pine timber in the South continued to be the Ips Engraver Beetle. Drought conditions and stress from severe winds can cause Ips Engraver Beetle populations to increase dramatically. In FY24, MS endured severe drought conditions which lead to an Ips outbreak in central and southwest portions of the state. A study was conducted by the USDA Southern Research Station using satellite imagery. An estimated over 80,000 acres of pine timber was impacted due to Ips Engraver Beetles.

Mississippi and Florida are the only two eastern U.S. states to have not yet located the presence of the emerald ash borer (EAB). Given the high invasiveness of the EAB, it is likely that infestations already exist in Mississippi but have not yet been detected. The EAB can attack and kill all species of ash in North America and decimate ash trees throughout eastern North America.

In FY 24, a media campaign was implemented to urge landowners to help report EAB infestations in Mississippi. Recent research has indicated that the mileage of railroads in a county and proximity to the nearest infested areas are the two most important predictors of new EAB infestations.



The Exotic Invasive Species Plan addresses the detection, identification, information, control, and reduction of six species of concern that impact the forest resources of Mississippi. These species are Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), Chinese tallow tree (*Sapium sebifera*), Chinese/European privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), Japanese/glossy privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*) and Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*). The plan also addresses the need to develop partnerships with other agencies and organizations to achieve shared goals regarding invasive species. Cogongrass is an aggressive invasive species that chokes out native vegetation, creates fuel for wildfires by burning at extremely hot temperatures, and devastates ecosystems.

Infested areas of Cogongrass are found on more than one (1) million acres throughout the southeastern United States. In FY24, the MFC's Cogongrass program assisted 87 landowners. The program treated 1,420 Cogongrass spots, which were comprised of 328 acres.

Kudzu is a climbing, semi-woody, perennial vine in the pea family. Kudzu kills other plants by smothering them under a blanket of leaves and by breaking branches or uprooting entire trees and shrubs through the sheer force of its weight. Kudzu plants grow rapidly, extending as much as 60 feet per season at a rate of about one foot per day. In FY24, the MFC Kudzu Cost Share Program assisted 25 landowners and treated 836 acres of kudzu.

Chinese tallow tree is another rapidly spreading invasive species that can invade almost all habitats from wet to dry and sun to shade. It crowds out native tree species once it becomes established, and its leaves and fruit are toxic to cattle and cause nausea and other sicknesses in humans. The agency made herbicide available to municipalities interested in treating and controlling Chinese Tallow Trees on public property. To identify and stop the spread of the Chinese Tallow Tree and other non-native invasive species throughout the state, the MFC developed and launched the MS Invasive Species interactive web-based app, designed for crowdsourcing the mapping of invasive species in Mississippi. The website has been widely used and received much publicity through various media outlets. As a result, the agency (and the public) is beginning to understand better the distribution of invasive species in the state.

## Forest Legacy Program

The Forest Legacy Program was authorized by the 1990 Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act to identify and protect environmentally important private forestland threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

The MFC administers the Forest Legacy Program through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. Private forestland is protected through fee-simple or conservation easement acquisition from interested landowners. The program is implemented in states that have completed an Assessment of Need or have incorporated the assessment information into their State Forest Action Plans. States in the Southern Region that have completed Assessments of Need are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

There are three Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi - Southeast, Central and Northeast. FLAs were identified based on many factors, including the habitat diversity, types of natural forest communities in each area, significant past and projected increases in human population and recent conversion of forestland to other uses.

## Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program provides technical assistance to support planning, demonstration projects, training, and continuing education in urban areas to develop viable and continuing community forestry programs. Support is offered to municipalities and communities to further program components such as tree ordinances, street tree inventories, and urban forest management plans. The U&CF program provides technical advice to developers and building contractors on tree preservation during site planning and construction. It assists homeowners with insects, diseases, and other tree care issues. The program also supports outreach, training, and continuing education opportunities for certified arborists, tree care professionals, and volunteers across the state.

The U&CF Grant Program is funded through the USDA Forest Service for administration, demonstration projects, and educational programs. The grant funding aids in developing long-term, self-sustaining urban and community forestry programs -- local or statewide -- with an emphasis on increasing local capacity, volunteer involvement, planning, training, and continuing education. Through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Mississippi was awarded an additional \$1,500,000 in grant funding, which is being used as an assistance program for six communities across Mississippi.

The Urban Forestry Division also publicizes and administers the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA®, Tree Campus Higher Education, and Tree Line USA® recognition programs in Mississippi. The U&CF Program promotes HelpStopThePop.com for reporting Chinese tallow tree locations, provides technical assistance to homeowners, and administers the delivery of Chinese tallow tree control assistance to municipalities in the state.

The U&CF Program is committed to providing financial assistance to state and local governments, non-profit groups, and educational institutions. Recently, the program has provided a substantial amount of \$161,237 in financial assistance, demonstrating its commitment to supporting urban and community forestry initiatives.

**U&CF PROGRAM PROVIDED**  
**\$161,237**  
**IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**  
**TO STATE AND LOCAL**  
**GOVERNMENTS, NON-PROFIT**  
**GROUPS, AND EDUCATIONAL**  
**INSTITUTIONS THROUGH THE**  
**URBAN AND COMMUNITY**  
**FORESTRY PROGRAM.**



# Forest Protection

## Forest Protection

MFC Wildland Firefighters work long hours in demanding and dangerous conditions to protect lives, homes and natural resources. The MFC suppresses, monitors and detects wildfire activity occurring day and night on approximately 19.2 million acres of forestland statewide.

**MFC WILDLAND  
FIREFIGHTERS RESPONDED  
TO AND SUPPRESSED  
2,502  
WILDFIRES  
THAT BURNED  
51,982  
ACRES**

## Fire Services

The MFC responded to and suppressed 2,502 wildfires that burned 51,982 acres in FY24. MFC Wildland Firefighters saved 3,886 homes and commercial buildings threatened by wildfire activity during our historic drought, along with 1,127 outbuildings. Wildfire destroyed 24 houses, 2 commercial buildings, and 73 outbuildings. The average wildfire size was 20.8 acres. The MFC dispatches wildland firefighting personnel and equipment to the location of reported wildfire activity 24/7. To report a wildfire, call 1-833-MFC-FIRE or dial 911.

Nationwide, nearly 9 out of 10 wildfires are human-caused and could have been prevented with proper care. In FY24, debris burns that escaped control were one of the leading known causes of wildfires in Mississippi. Burn bans are issued by each county board of supervisors and approved by the MFC to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires in Mississippi. In FY24, Governor Tate Reeves signed a partial statewide burn ban due to historic drought conditions.

Burn ban notifications are posted and updated on the MFC's website and social media pages. Visit [mfc.ms.gov/burn-bans](http://mfc.ms.gov/burn-bans) for an up-to-date list of burn bans statewide. Anyone who knowingly and willfully violates a burn ban is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined. Burn bans are enforced by the local Sheriff's Department.

In addition, any individual who starts an outdoor fire will be held responsible for the fire and the smoke generated as a result. If a fire escapes their control and becomes a wildfire, which burns or damages the forestland/ property of another person, the individual who started the fire will be held liable for any damages and suppression charges incurred.

**5,013  
STRUCTURES WERE  
THREATENED BY WILDFIRE  
ACTIVITY AND SAVED BY MFC  
WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS.  
IS YOUR HOME FIREWISE?**



The MFC coordinates the management of wildland firefighting resources within the state and deploys MFC employees to assist with federal wildland firefighting detail in times of need (as long as wildfire conditions permit in MS). The MFC collects the necessary data to make sound decisions and long-range plans to ensure the adequate allocation of resources needed for pre-suppression and suppression of wildfires. Burning permits are issued by MFC dispatch (upon request) when weather conditions are favorable for controlled burning.

**To request a burning permit, call 1-833-MFC-FIRE.**

Help the MFC prevent human-caused wildfire activity by checking burn bans and weather conditions before doing any outdoor burning. The wind can carry embers long distances, causing new spot fires one-half mile away from the original burning area. Check the local weather forecast - do not engage in any outdoor burning on dry, windy days. Everyday activities can cause wildfires. Sparks from dragging vehicle chains, hot equipment parts, cigarette ash and exhaust particles can cause unintended wildfires when vegetation is dry. One less spark, one less wildfire.

The MFC manages 12 Remote Area Weather Stations (RAWS) strategically located across the state as part of a national grid. The MFC also provides assistance to Mississippi and other states with natural disaster clean-up and recovery from weather-related events (hurricanes, ice storms, and large-scale wildfires).

Before engaging in any outdoor burning, visit [www.mfc.ms.gov/fire-weather](http://www.mfc.ms.gov/fire-weather) for the following predictive services information:

- Fire Danger Rating (USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire Assessment System)
- Current Weather
- Forecast
- Fire Danger Rating and Color Code
- Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI)
- Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)
- National Weather Service (NWS) Enhanced Radar Image Loop for the United States
- NWS Enhanced Radar Image Loop for Lower Mississippi Valley Sector
- NWS Fire Weather Report

## FY24 Wildfires by Cause

CAUSE	WILDFIRES	ACRES BURNED
Undetermined	1,128	27,600
Debris Burning	1,001	14,668
Incendiary	252	7,351
Equipment Use	80	1,383
Lightning	14	220
Smoking	6	32
Campfire	7	80
Railroad	10	601
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,502</b>	<b>51,982</b>



# Forest Protection

## Rural Fire Assistance

The MFC offers several grant programs designed to help Mississippi's volunteer fire departments (VFDs) obtain equipment and supplies needed to fight wildland fires. The MFC provides assistance to VFDs through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and the Firefighter Program (FFP). The MFC administers these programs through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. In FY24, the MFC's FEPP/FFP programs issued 115 pieces of wildland firefighting equipment, including vehicles, with an estimated value (or acquisition cost) of \$7,149,424.

Since 1956, the FEPP Program has allowed the USDA Forest Service to loan property to state forestry agencies for the purpose of fighting wildland and rural fires. The MFC delivered the first FFP equipment in FY10. The use of the equipment is reserved for wildland/rural firefighting and emergency response situations.

Visit [mfc.ms.gov/rural-fire-assistance](http://mfc.ms.gov/rural-fire-assistance) for more information on VFD grant programs.

## Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA)

Formerly known as the Rural Community Fire Protection Program, the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA) provided grants to eligible rural VFDs for the purchase of wildland firefighting and personal protection equipment

in FY24. The MFC administers this program through an agreement with the USDA Forest Service. In FY24, the MFC awarded 70 grants with a total value of \$293,323 to volunteer fire departments through the VFA Program.

## Aviation

In FY24, aerial surveillance was used to manage wildfire activity. On large fires, planes fly above the wildfire, delivering real-time information to wildland firefighting units on the ground to help them manage the current fire situation.

The MFC's Aviation Department also provides service and support to Forest Health and other Forest Management program areas.



THE MFC AWARDED  
**70 GRANTS**  
WITH A TOTAL VALUE OF  
**\$293,323**  
TO VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS.





## Communications

Dependable radio communication is an essential element of the MFC's ability to deploy firefighting resources and maintain situational awareness of wildfire activity. The Communications Department is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the MFC's radio network, which spans the state.

Components of the network include: mobile radios in the agency's fleet of vehicles and lightweight hand-held radios for field personnel, which provide statewide communication between dispatch centers and field personnel.

In FY11, the first set of radios was purchased for the Mississippi Wireless Integrated Network (MSWIN) system as required by the Mississippi Wireless Communications Committee (WCC). During FY24, the MFC continued to implement and use the new radios. The MSWIN system provides interoperable emergency radio communication across the state with all levels of government agencies and partner organizations.

**IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK OR EMBER TO START A WILDFIRE**

**MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION**  
MFC  
PROTECTION - PROMOTION - PLANNING

**CHECK FOR BURN BANS ON MFC WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**  
**MFC.MS.GOV**

**IF YOUR OUTDOOR FIRE BECOMES A WILDFIRE, YOU CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE**

**\$7,149,424**  
**IN WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING**  
**VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT WERE**  
**ISSUED TO MISSISSIPPI VFDS**  
**THROUGH THE FEPP/FFP**  
**PROGRAMS.**





## Forest Information

The MFC distributes relevant information to the public regarding all MFC program areas. The Forest Information Department supports MFC program areas by providing information dissemination, educational presentations, and public relations support. This Department oversees media relations, internal and external communications, agency publications, and MFC's digital presence management.

Two topic-specific outreach programs were also included as Public Outreach efforts in FY24, the Firewise Program and the Underserved Landowner Outreach Program.

## Public Outreach

During FY24, the Public Outreach Division of the Forest Information Department continued to provide public information, outreach programs and area communication support for the MFC. The MFC maintains an active Public Outreach Program designed to heighten the public's awareness of wildfire prevention, the MFC's mission, services, and the importance of forest resources. Local outreach activities include civic club presentations, sporting events, information booths at community events, forestry field days and visits to school groups, which are carried out across the state to reach individuals at the community level.

Two topic-specific outreach programs are also included as Public Outreach efforts in FY24, the Firewise Program and the Underserved Landowner Outreach Program.

Public Outreach Officers provide customized presentations and displays for schools, community organizations, and events based on the following topics:

- Wildfire Prevention
- Smokey Bear Appearances
- Firewise
- Forest Health
- Forest Stewardship
- General MFC Information
- Best Management Practices
- Underserved Landowner Outreach Program
- Urban and Community Forestry

**FY24 MFC  
OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

**331  
PROGRAMS**

-----  
**206,886  
PARTICIPANTS**





## Underserved Landowner Outreach Program

The Underserved Landowner Outreach Program is a collaborative project between the MFC, Alcorn State University, and the USDA Forest Service. This program offers assistance to underserved landowners in Mississippi and has three primary goals:

- To provide outreach support and technical assistance to underserved landowners.
- To encourage young people to seek careers in forestry.
- To work with Alcorn State University to develop and/or enhance projects of mutual forestry interest.

## Firewise

Firewise is an educational program for homeowners and community leaders. This program is for anyone connected to the wildland/ urban interface. Information is available on how to protect homes or communities until wildland firefighters arrive on the scene.

Factors addressed include design, construction and landscaping techniques to help structures better withstand wildfires.

Firewise workshops were conducted statewide in FY24. Workshops were provided free of charge to the public and brought citizens together to learn about protecting their communities in the wildland-urban interface.

Firewise literature can be found by visiting [mfc.ms.gov](http://mfc.ms.gov).

**A WILDFIRE'S DANGER CAN QUICKLY SPREAD BEYOND THE FOREST.**

**ARE YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY FIREWISE?**

**LEARN MORE AT [FIREWISEMS.COM](http://FIREWISEMS.COM).**

**NFPA** | **FIREWISE USA**  
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

**MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION**  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI  
MFC  
FOREST - PROTECT - THRIVE

## Business Support

The Business Support Department consists of five (5) service-oriented divisions: Financial Services, Information Systems, Purchasing and Property, Human Resources, and Safety and Training. These divisions provide services to support the MFC's program areas statewide.

## Financial Services

The MFC Financial Services Department plays a vital role in managing the financial needs of the agency. Planning and executing a FY24 total budget of roughly \$28M, the department provides in-depth analysis and financial insights to navigate complex financial landscapes, optimize asset allocation, and maximize financial efficiencies as well as fulfill the daily operation needs of the agency. Moreover, our skilled financial services team stays attuned to evolving economic trends and regulations, adapting strategies to mitigate risks and capitalize on opportunities in an ever-changing financial environment.

## Human Resources

The MFC's Human Resources (HR) department serves as the cornerstone of our organization's people-centric approach, fostering a positive work environment and driving employee success. This multifaceted department strategically handles recruitment, talent acquisition, and onboarding, ensuring a diverse and qualified workforce. It goes beyond administrative tasks, actively engaging in employee development by designing training programs, performance management systems, and career advancement pathways. By staying abreast of labor laws and industry trends, our HR professionals ensure compliance and create policies that prioritize employee well-being, work-life balance, diversity, and inclusion. Ultimately, our HR staff propels organizational growth by nurturing a motivated workforce, aligning individual goals with the agency's mission, and cultivating a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

## Information systems

The MFC I.T. Department plays a pivotal role in the organization by seamlessly integrating technology to optimize operations, enhance productivity, and foster innovation. I.T. staff manage and maintain the company's digital infrastructure, ensuring uninterrupted access to critical systems, data, and applications. The department also collaborates cross-functionally to understand and

address the unique technological needs of different departments, facilitating streamlined communication and efficient problem-solving. By staying updated on emerging technologies and best practices, the department continuously seeks opportunities to streamline processes, automate repetitive tasks, and drive overall organizational growth through technological advancements.

## Purchasing and Property

Our Purchasing and Property Department serves as the strategic backbone of an organization's procurement and asset management efforts. This department expertly manages the acquisition of goods, services, and equipment, negotiating favorable terms, and optimizing cost-efficiency. Through meticulous research and evaluation, they strive to ensure that the agency receives quality products at competitive prices, contributing to overall financial savings. The Purchasing and Property Department also oversees property management, efficiently allocating and maintaining physical assets and spaces, from office facilities to wildfire equipment. By implementing robust inventory control systems and lifecycle management strategies, the department maximizes asset utilization and minimizes waste, thus fostering the organization's commitment to responsible resource management.

## Safety & Training

Our Safety and Training Department plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of safety, learning, and growth within the organization. This department is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of employees by implementing comprehensive safety protocols, conducting risk assessments, and designing and delivering rigorous training programs. By identifying potential hazards and proactively addressing them, the Safety and Training Department minimizes accidents and promotes a secure work environment. It empowers employees with the knowledge and skills they need to perform their roles safely and efficiently, whether through hands-on workshops, e-learning modules, or simulations. Moreover, this department remains adaptable, continuously refining training methods and safety measures based on evolving industry standards and technological advancements. Through its efforts, the Safety and Training Department not only safeguards personnel and assets but also cultivates a workforce that is confident, proficient, and dedicated to upholding the highest standards of safety and operational excellence.

## MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION Fiscal Year 2024 Finances July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

### Revenue

	PROJECTED	ACTUAL	VARIANCE
State General Funds	\$ 15,732,212.00	\$ 15,732,212.00	\$ 0.00
Severance Tax	\$ 3,250,000.00	\$ 3,394,060.00	\$ 144,060.00
Acreage Tax	\$ 1,450,000.00	\$ 1,463,305.00	\$ 13,305.00
Crew Assistance (Agency Generated)	\$ 2,850,000.00	\$ 3,300,349.99	\$ 450,349.99
Federal Funds	\$ 4,675,413.00	\$ 4,675,413.00	\$ 0.00
MISC (Equip Sales, Rent, Etc.)	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 357,988.00	\$ 57,988.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 28,257,625.00</b>	<b>\$ 28,923,327.99</b>	<b>\$ 665,702.99</b>

### Expense

	PROJECTED	ACTUAL	VARIANCE
Salaries & Related	\$ 15,732,212.00	\$ 16,068,720.00	-\$ 336,508.00
Travel	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 358,922.00	-\$ 188,922.00
Operating (Recurring)	\$ 5,000,000.00	\$ 6,124,820.00	-\$ 1,124,820.00
Non-Operating (Equipment, etc.)	\$ 2,600,000.00	\$ 356,343.00	\$ 2,243,657.00
Subsidies, Loans, & Grants	\$ ,500,000.00	\$ 4,384,300.00	\$ 115,700.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 28,002,212.00</b>	<b>\$ 27,293,105.00</b>	<b>\$ 709,107.00</b>





*The mission of the Mississippi Forestry Commission is to provide active leadership in forest protection, forest management, forest inventory, and effective forest information distribution necessary for Mississippi's sustainable forest-based economy.*



MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION  
STATE FORESTER'S OFFICE  
(601) 359-1386  
3139 HIGHWAY 468 WEST  
PEARL, MISSISSIPPI 39208  
MFC.MS.GOV

@MSFORESTRYCOMM

